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Family Won't Believe Powers Was U.S. Spy

By MIT MINICLIER
SUN Staff Writer

The bewildered family of a 33-year-old cobbler's son from the coal-rich hills of southwest Virginia still refuse to believe that he was on a spying mission when his plane was shot down over central Russia on May 1.

"My son is not a spy," the father of Francis G. Powers insisted last night in Mill Creek, Va. Oliver Powers, 55, explained for, probably, the 100th time in 24 hours that his son was employed by Lockheed Aircraft Corp. to test weather conditions and space equipment for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

"I don't think he has confessed to being a spy . . ." the father insisted, contradicting charges by Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev that his son had flown over the Soviet Union on a photographic mission.

"The whole family's stunned. . . we still don't believe it," his brother-in-law Veril Melvin of Falls Church said last night.

"We had no idea he was doing anything like that . . . he never talked about his job," Mr. Melvin said, referring to a weekend State Department acknowledgement that Powers was "probably on a mission over Russia when shot down."

Washington officialdom remained silent after the State Department acknowledgement Saturday.

CENTRAL Intelligence Agency Chief Allen Dulles, for whom Premier Khrushchev says Powers worked, refused comment on either the Russian or the State Department release.

NASA headquarters said Powers was under Lockheed contract to "fly the U-2 on weather research and turbulence studies. Lockheed officials would say nothing.

Meanwhile the jet pilot's wife, Barbara, was flown from a Turkish hospital to her mother's home in Milledgeville, Ga. yesterday. A family spokesman said Mrs. Powers, who

suffered a fractured leg in a recent skiing accident, "had a very trying trip."

The couple, who celebrated their sixth wedding anniversary April 6, were due to return to the United States in October.

FRANCIS G. Powers was described a quite, modest boy who liked to spend his time alone. He enjoyed going for long hikes in the mountains, exploring caves, fishing, horseback riding and late flying, his father said when

contacted at a local radio station yesterday.

Young Powers, an only son, studied French, German and Spanish in school and "spoke parts of several other languages," his father said.

"He was pretty much of a home boy . . . he didn't like big groups and felt out of place with them, like I would if I got in Washington traffic" the 33-year-old cobbler quipped.

Francis took his first plane (Continued on page A-3)



FRANCIS G. POWERS